

VZCZCXYZ0008
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSK #0792 2001415
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 191415Z JUL 05
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2589
INFO RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3294
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 2967
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 2837
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3066
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 1359
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 0185
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU 0081
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0094
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 000792

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR DRL/PHD
DEPT ALSO FOR EUR/OHI
DEPT ALSO FOR EUR/RPM for CSCE Helsinki Commission Staff

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: Roma Update: Belarus

REF: Minsk 0163

¶1. Summary: On July 5, the DCM met with Belarusian Roma leader Oleg Kozlovskiy. Kozlovskiy requested a meeting with the Embassy in order to share recent developments within the Roma community, while also reiterating continued concerns and problems. Belarusian authorities generally ignore the Roma, but did recently support the publication of a Roma newsletter. On the other hand instances of discrimination continue to occur. One imminent problem concerns Kozlovskiy the most - in September funding support for Roma Holocaust victims will end. End summary.

¶2. Oleg Kozlovskiy, President of the Roma Communities of the CIS and the Baltics, requested a meeting with the Embassy to provide updated information on the status of the Roma in Belarus. Two competing Roma organizations exist in Belarus (reftel). Kozlovskiy, however, is widely considered to represent the majority of Belarusian Roma. [Note: The other is led by Nikolai Kalinin, head of the Roma Lawyers' Group.]

The Roma and the Government

¶3. According to Kozlovskiy, the general attitude of the government towards Belarusian Roma can be characterized in one word - indifference. Although the government occasionally aids the Roma community, it has no comprehensive policy to support and integrate them into Belarusian society. Complicating the situation, Belarusian Roma want support, but they do not want to assimilate and lose their national and cultural identity. Kozlovskiy cited lack of educational opportunities as the most intractable problem the Roma face. Contrary to myth, the problems stem from sheer poverty, and not from cultural prohibitions against co-educational learning. Roma parents are often unable to afford textbooks and children leave school early to earn money. Kozlovskiy asserted that, unlike other groups, Roma receive no social benefits.

¶3. In a recent positive step, the Committee on Religious and National Affairs (CRNA) provided the equivalent of approximately one thousand USD for publication of a Roma

newsletter, "Roma Word." According to Kozlovskiy, this publication helps educate Roma in all areas of life. [Note: Illiteracy remains perhaps the greatest constraint on Belarusian Roma progress.]

¶4. Kozlovskiy mentioned a few instances of harassment against Roma over the last six months. In the most serious, he claimed in March a Roma family in Brest was taken to a police station without cause. Police officers videotaped them and took their fingerprints. On the positive side, when Kozlovskiy's organization filed a complaint, the Brest police did apologize to the family.

¶5. On the other hand, in May Kozlovskiy sent a request to Minsk city authorities for a plot of land for construction of a Roma cultural and social center. The authorities never officially responded, but unofficially informed Kozlovskiy that the Roma would not receive permission. Kozlovskiy believes the denial results from the generally biased and suspicious attitude of Belarusian authorities to the Roma community.

Holocaust Victim Support

¶6. Kozlovskiy is IOM's implementer for its Holocaust Survivor Assistance to Roma in Belarus (reftel). IOM funding to support these elderly Roma will end in September, when the money runs out. Kozlovskiy informed the DCM that he still has not found alternative sources for funding.

KROL